

The Future is in Natural Gas

One of the greatest threats facing our country's economic recovery and national security today is the high price of oil. The United States imports more than 10 million barrels of oil each year. Not only does this keep gas prices high, meaning less consumer spending and a weaker economy, but it furthers our reliance on countries whose interests run counter to our own.

With an abundant supply of natural gas in New York and many other states across the United States, now is the time to utilize our own energy resources to enhance the Empire State's – and our nation's – economy, environment and energy security.

New York sits atop the Marcellus Shale, one of the most bountiful supplies of natural gas in the world. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is currently finalizing a Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS), and in the coming months, the Cuomo administration is expected to issue final regulations for gas development – regulations which are anticipated to be the strongest and most comprehensive in the nation. When opened for safe and responsible natural gas production, New York's economy stands to benefit from millions of dollars of revenue, thousands of new jobs and more affordable fuel for the transportation and power generation sectors.

Already, businesses and municipalities across the United States have taken notice of the economic and environmental benefits of natural gas vehi-

cles (NGVs) and are quickly converting fleets to run on compressed natural gas (CNG).

As gasoline prices hit record highs, natural gas costs about one-third of conventional gasoline and diesel at the pump. These record low prices are due to discoveries of shale reserves, coupled with technological breakthroughs in hydraulic fracturing. Experts are predicting low, stable natural gas prices for at least the next 20 years.

And the benefits to the environment are not to be overlooked. NGVs emit substantially less carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and particulates than their gasoline or diesel counterparts, improving the quality of our air.

NGVs also provide a cleaner ride and outperform conventional fuel vehicles with higher octane ratings, better fuel efficiency and lower maintenance costs.

Smithtown became the first municipality in New York to switch its waste trucks from diesel power to natural gas in 2007. As a result, Smithtown expects to displace 1.5 million gallons of diesel fuel that would have otherwise been used over a seven-year contract, resulting in \$6 million in savings.

The trucks are also projected to reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides by 265 tons and particulate matter by 15 tons over the life of the fueling contract, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Today, Smithtown has a total of nearly 40 vehicles that run on natural gas, including 22 garbage trucks, eight highway department general duty trucks, seven cars, a street

sweeper and a pick-up truck. There are also two CNG fueling stations within the town limits.

And Smithtown has continued moving toward NGVs. In May 2011, the city welcomed two new CNG shuttle buses to its fleet to serve the town's senior citizens department. And Smithtown's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Environmental Protection Director Russell Barnett was honored with a 2010 Energy Vision Leadership Award for his role in converting the town's entire fleet to natural gas and for pioneering the largest natural gas refueling station in the eastern U.S.

Smithtown is not the only example of NGV success in New York. In 2011, as part of the Federal Transit Authority's State of Good Repair Program, more than \$33 million was made available to New York City for the purchase of 74 new natural gas buses. Today, North America's largest bus fleet sports 1,100 CNG buses, and the city's overall natural gas bus network continues to significantly reduce harmful emissions.

The Department of Motor Vehicles reports that there are 4,022 CNG vehicles on New York roads today, the majority of which are publicly owned. Additionally, more than 100 CNG fueling stations dot the Empire State, approximately 30 percent of which are open to the public.

These examples represent the potential opportunities for New Yorkers to utilize the abundance of affordable, clean and domestic natural gas for transportation. By embracing NGVs, New Yorkers can take a very practical step to promote clean air in their communities, create new jobs and benefit local economies – all while enhancing our nation's energy security and keeping our energy dollars and jobs here at home.

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